



# Comprehension Skills

40 Short Passages for Close Reading

**GRADE 2**

Linda Ward Beech



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# Using This Book

Reading comprehension in nonfiction involves numerous thinking skills. Students require these skills to make sense of a text and become successful readers. This book offers practice in key skills needed to meet the Common Core State Standards in Reading/Language Arts for grade two. (See page 6 for more.) Each student page includes a short passage focusing on three of these essential comprehension skills.

## Comprehension Skills At-a-Glance

Use the information that follows to introduce the reading comprehension skills covered in this book.

### Main Idea & Details

Understanding the main or key idea of a paragraph is crucial for a reader. The main idea is what the paragraph is about. The other parts of the paragraph help to explain more about this key idea. Sometimes, the main idea is in the first sentence of a paragraph.

The information that supports the main idea is usually referred to as the details. Details help a reader gain a fuller understanding of a paragraph.

### Context Clues

Using context means determining an unfamiliar word's meaning by studying the phrases, sentences, and overall text with which the word appears. Context clues help readers comprehend and enjoy a text and also read more smoothly and efficiently.

### Compare & Contrast

Recognizing how events, characters, places, and facts are alike and different helps a reader gain a richer understanding of a text. Sometimes a reader can learn more about something by finding out what it is *not* like than what it is like. A comparison shows similarities, while a contrast shows differences.


Passage 5

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

### Meet Mercury

Can you name the planets in our solar system? Mercury is one of them. Like the other planets, Mercury moves in a path around the Sun. Mercury travels faster than the other planets. It speeds along at about 107,000 miles an hour. Mercury is the planet closest to the Sun. Its days are very hot, and its nights are very cold. There is no water on Mercury.



1. The main idea of the paragraph is  
☐ A. the lack of water on Mercury.  
☐ B. the planets in the solar system.  
☐ C. what the planet Mercury is like.
2. A detail that tells more about the main idea is  
☐ A. the speed at which Mercury travels around the Sun.  
☐ B. the names of the other planets in the solar system.  
☐ C. how fast other planets in the solar system travel.
3. Write one way that Mercury differs from other planets.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

L. Finkel, S. Orville-Davis, S. Conroy & Conroy

In this paragraph, students have to read the entire text and ask themselves, "What is this paragraph mainly about?" The main idea is supported by different facts about Mercury.


Passage 2

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

### A Gardener's Friend

What do ladybugs eat? Their main food is a tiny insect called an aphid. Most gardeners think of aphids as pests. These insects cause harm to plants by sucking out their juices. When people see ladybugs in their gardens, however, they are pleased.



1. Which sentence tells what most likely happens next?  
☐ A. Gardeners will get rid of the ladybugs.  
☐ B. The ladybugs will eat the aphids.  
☐ C. The aphids will attack the ladybugs.
2. In this paragraph the word *pests* must mean  
☐ A. troublemakers.  
☐ B. plants.  
☐ C. helpers.
3. How are ladybugs and aphids different?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

L. Finkel, S. Orville-Davis, S. Conroy & Conroy

In this example, other words in the paragraph provide a context for comprehending the word *pests*.

## Predict

Good readers take time to think about a text. One way they do this is by thinking ahead to determine what may happen next or how an event will unfold. Often, information a reader has come across in the text provides clues to what will happen next. In many cases readers also use what they already know when they make predictions.

## Inference

Although most primary students don't know what an inference is, many are most likely making inferences—both in their daily lives and when reading—without being aware of it. Students should understand that writers don't include every detail in their writing; it is up to readers to supply some information. A reader makes a guess or inference by putting together what is in a text with what he or she already knows. Inferring makes a significant difference in how much a reader gains from a text.

## Fact & Opinion

Readers who can identify and differentiate between statements of fact and opinion are better able to analyze and assess a text. Students should learn to recognize phrases, such as *I think* and *you should*, that signal opinions.

## Tips

★ Tell students to first read the passage and then answer the questions. Show them how to fill in the circles for bubble-test questions.

★ The comprehension skills targeted in the questions accompanying each passage are labeled at the bottom of the page.

★ Review the completed pages with students on a regular basis. Encourage them to explain their thinking for each correct answer.


Passage 21

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

### Cara's Cat

Cara's cat didn't like to be left alone. Cara never knew what Honey would do when the family was out. Sometimes the cat just slept. But sometimes she was loud. One day Cara found a big mess in the bathroom. Honey had urinated the toilet paper. It was in shreds. Bits of it were everywhere. It took a long time to clean up Honey's mess.



- In this paragraph, the word *shreds* must mean
  - ☐ A. rolls.
  - ☐ B. pieces.
  - ☐ C. squares.
- You can predict that when she saw the mess, Cara
  - ☐ A. hugged Honey.
  - ☐ B. was mad at Honey.
  - ☐ C. got a new cat.
- You can guess that Honey
  - ☐ A. didn't like Cara's family.
  - ☐ B. liked to have people around.
  - ☐ C. wanted to please Cara.

1. Comprehension 2. Facts 3. Opinion

The writer never says that the cat likes to have people around, but information in the paragraph plus what readers already know helps make it a likely guess.


Passage 14

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

### Nest Soup

Birds called swifts are popular in Thailand. People there welcome the birds into their homes. In one city the birds even live in a hotel. The reason the birds are in such demand is their nests. Bird's nest soup is a big treat in Thailand. I don't think I would care for it. Vegetable soup seems better to me!



- Write fact or opinion next to each sentence.
  - A. Birds called swifts are popular in Thailand. \_\_\_\_\_
  - B. I don't think I would care for it. \_\_\_\_\_
  - C. In one city the birds even live in a hotel. \_\_\_\_\_
- In this paragraph, the word *popular* means
  - ☐ A. disliked.
  - ☐ B. useful.
  - ☐ C. liked.
- Write another opinion from the paragraph. \_\_\_\_\_

1. Fact & Opinion 2. Comprehension 3. Fact & Opinion

To appreciate this story, the reader should understand that the writer has shared several opinions as well as some facts about the bird's nest soup.

# Meeting the Common Core State Standards

The passages and comprehension questions in this book are designed to help you meet both your specific English/Language Arts standards and learning expectations as well as those recommended by the Common Core State Standards Initiative (CCSSI). The activities in this book align with the following CCSSI standards for grade two.

## Reading Standards for Literature

### Key Ideas and Details

1. Ask and answer such questions as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
3. Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

### Craft and Structure

5. Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

7. Use information gained from the illustrations and words in a print text to demonstrate understanding of its characters, setting, or plot.

### Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, in the grades 2–3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

## Reading Standards for Informational Text

### Key Ideas and Details

1. Ask and answer such questions as *who*, *what*, *where*, *when*, *why*, and *how* to demonstrate understanding of key details in a text.
3. Describe the connection between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text.

### Craft and Structure

4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases in text relevant to a *grade 2 topic or subject area*.
6. Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe.

### Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

8. Describe how reasons support specific points the author makes in a text.

### Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

10. By the end of the year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in the grades 2–3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

## Reading Standards: Foundational Skills

### Fluency

4. Read with sufficient accuracy and fluency to support comprehension.
  - a. Read on-level text with purpose and understanding.
  - c. Use context to confirm or self-correct word recognition and understanding, rereading as necessary.

## Language Standards

### Knowledge of Language

3. Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.

### Vocabulary Acquisition and Use

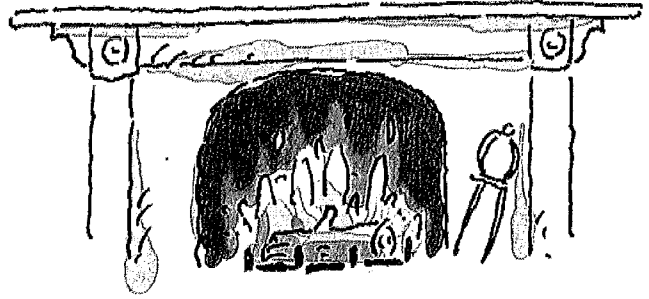
4. Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on *grade 2 reading and content*, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies.
  - a. Use sentence-level context as a clue to the meaning of a word or phrase.
5. Demonstrate understanding of word relationships and nuances in word meanings.
  - b. Distinguish shades of meaning among closely related verbs.
6. Use words and phrases acquired through conversations, reading and being read to, and responding to texts.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

# Rob's Job

The Dells had a big fireplace. On snowy winter days they often lit a fire. Rob's job was to make sure there was plenty of wood to burn. He would take his sled to the woodshed. There he loaded logs onto the sled. Then he would **haul** the wood back to the house and bring it in to burn.



1. In this paragraph, the word **haul** must mean
  - ☐ A. chop.
  - ☐ B. pull.
  - ☐ C. burn.
2. The main idea of this paragraph is
  - ☐ A. why Rob had a sled.
  - ☐ B. snowy winter days.
  - ☐ C. getting wood for a fireplace.
3. How do you think the Dells feel about their fireplace?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

# A Gardener's Friend

What do ladybugs eat? Their main food is a tiny insect called an aphid.

Most gardeners think of aphids as **pests**.

These insects cause harm to plants by sucking out their juices.

When people see ladybugs in their gardens, however, they are pleased.



1. Which sentence tells what most likely happens next?

- ☐ A. Gardeners will get rid of the ladybugs.
- ☐ B. The ladybugs will eat the aphids.
- ☐ C. The aphids will attack the ladybugs.

2. In this paragraph the word **pests** must mean

- ☐ A. troublemakers.
- ☐ B. plants.
- ☐ C. helpers.

3. How are ladybugs and aphids different?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

# A Tale of Tails

Pigs are known for having curly tails. They're so cute! Experts say that you can tell how healthy a pig is by the curl of his tail. A pig with a curly tail is in good health. But a pig with a straight tail is not. Poor pig. A straight tail on a pig is a sign of illness. Farmers should take good care of their pigs so they don't get sick.



1. Write *fact* or *opinion* next to each sentence.

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. They're so cute!
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. Experts say that you can tell how healthy a pig is by the curl of its tail.
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. A straight tail on a pig is a sign of illness.

2. Which sentence is most likely true?

- ☐ A. Pigs like to wag their tails.
- ☐ B. Pigs always get sick.
- ☐ C. Farmers check their pigs' tails often.

3. What will a farmer most likely do if a pig's tail is straight?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

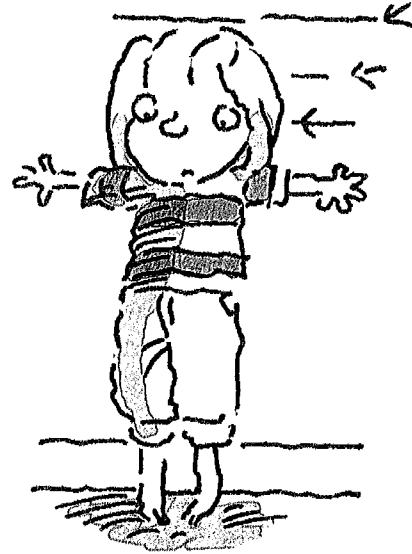
\_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

# A Mark on the Wall

Anna took off her shoes. She stood straight with her back against the wall. Anna's mother put the ruler on Anna's head and made a little mark on the wall. It was two inches above another mark. Next to the new mark, Anna's mother wrote the date. "Wow!" she said. "No wonder your jeans are too short."



1. Which sentence is most likely true?
  - ☐ A. Anna's mother is measuring Anna's head.
  - ☐ B. Anna's mother is mad at Anna.
  - ☐ C. Anna has grown two inches taller.
  
2. You can guess that the next mark will be
  - ☐ A. the same.
  - ☐ B. lower.
  - ☐ C. higher.
  
3. Most likely Anna's mother will
  - ☐ A. buy Anna new jeans.
  - ☐ B. give Anna old jeans.
  - ☐ C. make Anna stop growing.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

# Meet Mercury

Can you name the planets in our solar system? Mercury is one of them. Like the other planets, Mercury moves in a path around the Sun. Mercury travels faster than the other planets. It speeds along at about 107,000 miles an hour. Mercury is the planet closest to the Sun. Its days are very hot, and its nights are very cold. There is no water on Mercury.



1. The main idea of the paragraph is
  - ☐ A. the lack of water on Mercury.
  - ☐ B. the planets in the solar system.
  - ☐ C. what the planet Mercury is like.
2. A detail that tells more about the main idea is
  - ☐ A. the speed at which Mercury travels around the Sun.
  - ☐ B. the names of the other planets in the solar system.
  - ☐ C. how fast other planets in the solar system travel.
3. Write one way that Mercury differs from other planets.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

# Ellen's Saturday

When Ellen wakes up on Saturday,  
there is snow on the ground.  
Ellen **races** through her breakfast.  
Then she pulls on a hat, jacket, and gloves.  
Her boots are not in the closet,  
so she runs outside in her sneakers.  
She joins her friends to go sledding.



1. Which sentence tells what most likely happens next?

- ☐ A. Ellen's feet will get cold and wet.
- ☐ B. Ellen will lose her sled on the hill.
- ☐ C. Ellen's friends will take off their boots.

2. You can tell that Ellen loves

- ☐ A. breakfast.
- ☐ B. snow.
- ☐ C. boots.

3. In this paragraph, the word **races** means

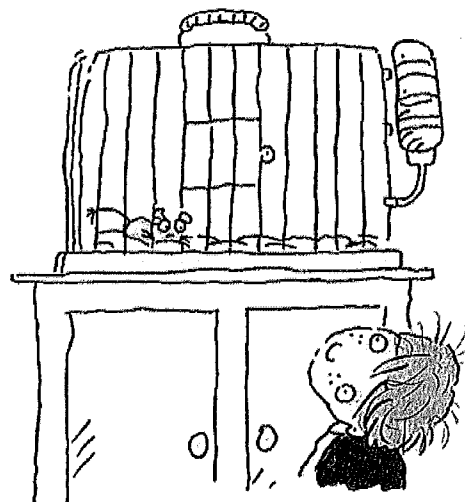
- ☐ A. rushes.
- ☐ B. drags.
- ☐ C. runs.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

# School Zoo

Many classrooms have pets. This is the best way for students to learn about animals. But classroom pets need a place to go during the summer. In Plano, Texas, the schools have a mini-zoo. Teachers can **borrow** pets for the school months. When summer comes, they return the pets to the zoo. Schools in other towns should follow this example.



1. Write *fact* or *opinion* next to each sentence.

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. This is the best way for students to learn about animals.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ B. In Plano, Texas, the schools have a mini-zoo.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ C. Schools in other towns should follow this example.

2. You can guess that

- ☐ A. the pets dislike being in the classroom.  
☐ B. there is no school in the summer.  
☐ C. the zoo closes in the summer.

3. In this paragraph, the word **borrow** means

- ☐ A. have forever.  
☐ B. have for awhile.  
☐ C. pay money for.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

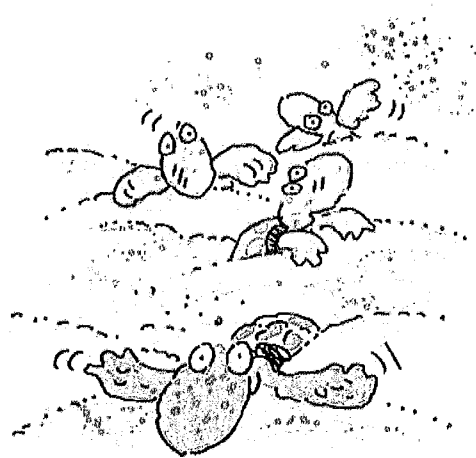
# Birds and Turtles

Mother birds lay eggs in nests where they are safe.

Little birds hatch from the eggs.

They cheep and cheep until their parents bring them food. Turtles lay eggs, too.

Mother turtles lay their eggs in the sand where the eggs will be safe. But mother turtles cover the eggs and leave. When it is time, small turtles **hatch** from the eggs. They dig their way up and learn to find food on their own.



1. How are birds and turtles alike?

- ☐ A. They have hard shells.
- ☐ B. The young hatch from eggs.
- ☐ C. The mothers leave the eggs.

2. How are birds and turtles different?

- ☐ A. Bird parents feed their young.
- ☐ B. They lay eggs in safe places.
- ☐ C. The young need food to eat.

3. In this paragraph, the word **hatch** means

- ☐ A. opening on a roof.
- ☐ B. make a plan.
- ☐ C. come out of.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

# A Smart Fish



Fred was a very smart fish. He lived in a peaceful river. Nothing much happened there unless people came around.

Then Fred had to be **alert**.

A yummy worm might mean a trap.

If Fred wasn't careful, he could end up as someone's supper.

He had seen it happen to many careless fish.

1. In this paragraph, the word **alert** must mean

- ☐ A. watchful.
- ☐ B. careless.
- ☐ C. sleepy.

2. You can guess that a worm Fred saw might be

- ☐ A. on a fishing pole.
- ☐ B. in the ground.
- ☐ C. on a water lily.

3. If Fred saw a worm, you can predict he would

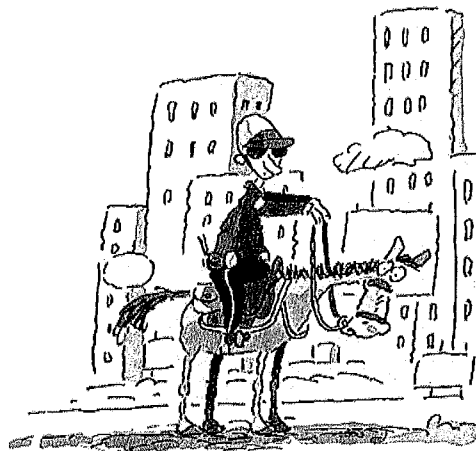
- ☐ A. eat it quickly.
- ☐ B. swim away.
- ☐ C. try to save it.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

# Horse Helpers

Horses are wonderful helpers for humans. In some cities the police ride horses to control large crowds. Cowboys use horses to help round up herds of cattle. In some countries farmers still use horses to pull plows or wagons. People also use horses to carry them from place to place.



1. The main idea of the paragraph is

- ☐ A. the different jobs that horses can do.
- ☐ B. how the police use horses in crowds.
- ☐ C. the ways that animals help people.

2. A detail that tells more about the main idea is

- ☐ A. how cowboys use horses in their work.
- ☐ B. the kinds of horses used in police work.
- ☐ C. the names of countries using farm horses.

3. Write *fact* or *opinion* next to each sentence.

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. Cowboys use horses to help round up herds of cattle.
- \_\_\_\_\_ B. Horses are wonderful helpers for humans.
- \_\_\_\_\_ C. People also use horses to carry them from place to place.



Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

# Kinds of Leaves

The leaves on trees are not all alike. Some leaves have jagged edges called teeth. Toothed leaves can be oval, skinny, or shaped like a heart. Beech and elm trees have such leaves. Other trees have leaves shaped like a hand with the fingers spread out. These leaves have three to seven fingers, also called lobes. Many maple trees have such leaves. Both types of leaves drop off trees in the fall.



1. How are toothed leaves and hand-shaped leaves alike?
  - ☐ A. They grow on trees.
  - ☐ B. They have lobes.
  - ☐ C. They have teeth.
2. How are toothed leaves and hand-shaped leaves different?
  - ☐ A. Maple leaves drop off in the fall.
  - ☐ B. Elm leaves are shaped like hands.
  - ☐ C. Toothed leaves have jagged edges.
3. The main idea of this paragraph is
  - ☐ A. trees have different kinds of leaves.
  - ☐ B. maples trees have hand-shaped leaves.
  - ☐ C. beech trees have jagged edges.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

# Raisin Capital

California is the raisin capital of the world. Farmers there begin by growing grapes. When the grapes are **ripe**, workers pick them from the vine. Then the grapes are laid out in California's dry, sunny air. The grapes begin to get wrinkled as they lose their water. They change color, too.



1. Which sentence tells what most likely happens next?

- ☐ A. The grapes get moldy and rotten.
- ☐ B. Farmers water the dry grapes.
- ☐ C. The grapes turn into raisins.

2. You can guess that grapes grow well because

- ☐ A. they grow on vines.
- ☐ B. of California's dry, sunny air.
- ☐ C. California is the raisin capital.

3. In this paragraph, the word **ripe** means

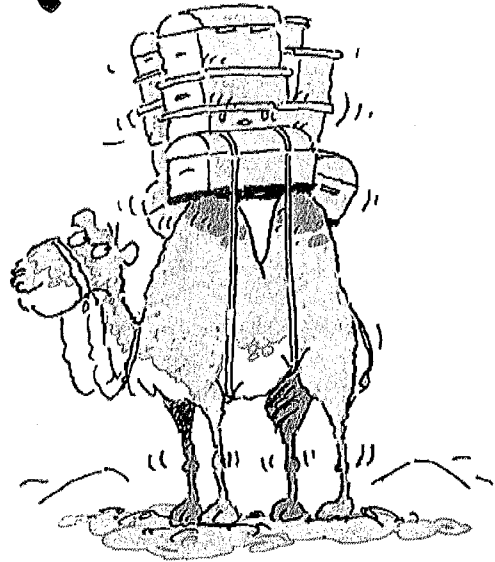
- ☐ A. wrinkled.
- ☐ B. picked.
- ☐ C. full-grown.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

# Ship of the Desert

Do you know what a ship of the desert is? It is a camel. These animals are good for carrying people and supplies across hot, dry deserts. Camels can go many days without getting thirsty. Camels can also go for a long time without food. They live off the fat in their humps when there is no food.



1. Which sentence is most likely true?
  - ☐ A. Camels eat sand most of the time.
  - ☐ B. Camels don't like to eat or drink.
  - ☐ C. The desert has little food or water.
  
2. You can guess that some trips camels make
  - ☐ A. take many days.
  - ☐ B. are in cold places.
  - ☐ C. are across the sea.
  
3. After a camel crosses a desert, you can predict that it
  - ☐ A. isn't very hungry.
  - ☐ B. drinks a lot of water.
  - ☐ C. acts like a ship.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

# Nest Soup

Birds called swifts are **popular** in Thailand. People there welcome the birds into their homes. In one city the birds even live in a hotel. The reason the birds are in such demand is their nests. Bird's nest soup is a big treat in Thailand. I don't think I would care for it. Vegetable soup seems better to me!



1. Write *fact* or *opinion* next to each sentence.

- \_\_\_\_\_ A. Birds called swifts are popular in Thailand.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ B. I don't think I would care for it.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ C. In one city the birds even live in a hotel.

2. In this paragraph, the word **popular** means

- ☐ A. disliked.  
☐ B. useful.  
☐ C. liked.

3. Write another opinion from the paragraph.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

# Using Plants

Long ago, people used plants to make colorful dyes. They boiled plants in water. Different plants gave off different colors. For example, boiled acorns made a light brown, and beets made a bright pink. The skins from certain onions made an orange-colored dye. Once the **dyes** were ready, people dipped wool or other cloth into them.



1. In this paragraph, the word **dyes** must mean

- ☐ A. stops living.
- ☐ B. colorings.
- ☐ C. foods.

2. A good title for this paragraph would be

- ☐ A. Colors From Plants.
- ☐ B. Pink From Beets.
- ☐ C. Orange From Onions.

3. You can guess that today

- ☐ A. vegetables are never used in dyes.
- ☐ B. there are other ways to dye cloth.
- ☐ C. dyes are not as colorful as long ago.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Read the paragraph. Then answer the questions.

# Beatrix Potter

Beatrix Potter (1866–1943) loved animals. She also loved to draw. As a young girl she kept a sketchbook of plants and family pets. She became a student of nature. Later on, Beatrix Potter wrote stories for children. The main characters were animals. Perhaps you have read *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* or *Squirrel Nutkin*.



- 1.** The main idea of the paragraph is
  - ☐ A. Beatrix Potter's interest in nature.
  - ☐ B. the titles of Beatrix Potter's books.
  - ☐ C. the names of Potter family pets.
  
- 2.** A detail that tells more about the main idea is
  - ☐ A. how Beatrix Potter learned to draw.
  - ☐ B. what Potter drew in her sketchbook.
  - ☐ C. how the book *Squirrel Nutkin* ends.
  
- 3.** You can guess that Beatrix Potter
  - ☐ A. read her stories to pets.
  - ☐ B. drew the pictures for her stories.
  - ☐ C. wrote stories about plants.